What ABD Diplomates Said After Testing CertLink®
As part of the process to ensure CertLink is the right platform to assess diplomates’ clinical knowledge, ABD conducted extensive testing. In 2019, ABD diplomates were invited to pilot CertLink. In total, 378 diplomates volunteered to test the platform and provide feedback. Below is a summary of survey findings administered at the pilot’s midpoint, and feedback from 20 diplomate pilot participants randomly selected for telephone interviews, post-pilot.

Survey Results

**Devices:**
85% used a computer (laptop or desktop), 14% used a smartphone, 10% used a tablet.*

*Multiple responses were allowed.

**Relevance and Usefulness of Questions:**
“Questions were relevant to my practice.” – 85% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
“CertLink questions were useful learning tools.” – 84% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
“CertLink helps me stay current in my specialty.” – 80% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
“CertLink helps me identify my knowledge gaps.” – 76% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.
“CertLink helps me provide better care to patients.” – 75% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

**Question Quality:**
80% rated the overall quality of CertLink content as ‘good,’ ‘very good’ or ‘excellent.’
90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Question difficulty was appropriate.”
85% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Questions assessed my judgment, going beyond factual recall.”

**Functionality:**
89% reported they were comfortable using CertLink.
87% reported it was easy to learn to use CertLink.
87% reported it was easy to find the information they needed on the CertLink site.
85% reported they were satisfied with CertLink.
Interviewees had a nearly universal positive experience with the CertLink pilot, noting that it prioritized lifelong learning rather than memorization, and that content was more relevant and practical than the once-every-10-year Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Exam. When asked to rate overall experience with CertLink on a 10-point scale with 10 being ‘extremely positive,’ the average score was 8.8.

“You get the results back, and you figure out what the right answer was, and you learn from it. You get immediate feedback and knowledge. Whereas on the big exam, all we get is a final score—you don’t get any knowledge or insights. If the whole point is to learn, this avenue is better for that.”

“I think it’s a valuable learning tool. I think if utilized appropriately, it will achieve what we’re trying to get out of continuing medical education.”

“Like any student, we cram as much info into our brain as we can when studying for the 10-year exam. As far as a method for retaining clinical information, it’s not good. This approach is better for our education, and it’s better on the gastritis too.”

“It’s a great way to consolidate multiple activities—journal reading, testing, looking things up online... And when you get a question wrong and you know that immediately, it drives to you to explore.”

Interviewees noted that article- and image-based questions were relevant and sufficiently difficult with regard to testing the clinical knowledge needed to practice in the dermatology specialty. They also noted that the frequency and volume of both the questions and reminder emails were suitable.

“They were wonderfully relevant. I thought they were appropriate articles; they were an appropriate length that you could read within half an hour. I liked the fact that they’re new. They should avoid articles from 20 years ago. Keeping things up to date is important.”

“The difficulty level seemed right. The major time investment was reading articles, and it was reasonable.”

“They were the sort of articles directly applicable to patient care that I would normally read anyway.”

“I thought they were all relevant and finding the answers to the questions was pretty easy—but I still read the article.”

“I read about managing certain conditions and new medications that will lead to better patient care. I recall the articles they picked being just that. They were the sort of articles directly applicable to patient care that I would normally read anyway.”

Some interviewees noted that some articles used in the pilot were difficult to access due to a lack of subscription to the cited journal. ABD leadership listened to this feedback and will ensure all article-based questions provide seamless access to an article that does not require users to enter journal credentials.

Similarly, some interviewees expressed the need for higher resolution photos to be used for image-based questions. Going forward, ABD and the question writers will take special care to vet all photos used on the platform to ensure they are of the highest possible quality and resolution.

Interviewees stated the optimal CertLink experience is on a computer (desktop or laptop) or on a tablet with a large screen. Interviewees cited the constant scrolling needed to get through journal articles on smartphones as a reason to avoid using those devices while participating.